THE ROLE OF UNITED NATIONS IN RWANDA CONFLICT 1990-1994

Ismael Buchanan
PhD candidate, International Islamic University Malaysia
Department of Political Science
Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences,
E-mail: ismaelofr@yahoo.fr
(December 2007)

1. Abstract

The Rwanda incident is described as one of the most abhorrent events of the 20th century, in which Rwandans killed Rwandans. The brutal Hutu decimated the Tutsi population and even targeted the moderates Hutus. Unfortunately, UN test-failure resulted for the role (or lack thereof due to the limitations of its rules of engagement) it played during the Rwandan genocide. UN neither prevented the mass violence, nor did it stop the killing once the genocide began. This study will therefore attempt to response to the UN's explanation and justification of its inadequate intervention in Rwanda. Furthermore, this study will attempt to explore the actual position of UN towards Rwanda and its minority population, Tutsi, and some moderates hutu, who were the major victims of UN's ineffectiveness in Rwanda.

2. Introduction

The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed one of the worst crimes in human history: the genocide in Rwanda. The brutal mass killings, carried out in a planned fashion, began on the evening of the 6th April,1994, after the plane bringing the former president of the Republic of Rwanda, Juvenal Habyarimana, back to Kigali from a cease-fire meeting in Arusha, exploded above the Kigali airport. This attack triggers off the extremination of the Tutsi population, as well as moderate Hutus. this extremination that planned for a month, began at dawn in the capital's

streets and then spread to the rest of the country. It is widely believed that between 800,000 and One million people were hacked to death one by one by their own countrymen through the help of the militia "interahamwe"and the armed forces known as "Ex-FAR". There were unfortunately, twenty-five hundred UN peacekeepers on the ground who failed to prevent the genocide. The worse still the UN ordered its forces not to protect civilians and on April 22nd, when over 100.000 people had been killed, the bulk of the force was ordered to withdraw and on top of that, as millions were internally displaced, killed and injured, the mission ordered its soldiers to abandon them and the order had come from the Security Council and nobody objected.

3. Problem Statement

This study is entitled as "The Role of United Nations in Rwanda Conflict 1990-1994**".** The purpose of this study is to evaluate the obstacles that were faced by the UN in the areas of preventive diplomacy, peace-making, peacekeeping, peace-enforcement and peace building in pre and post war situation in

Rwanda since 1990 and 1994 that incapacitated them from preventing the genocide.

Hence, this study will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What were the causes and legal nature of Rwanda's conflict?
2. Why UN failed to intervene in the Rwanda conflict?
3. What has UN done in the field of preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, peace making, peace enforcement and peace building in Rwanda conflict?
4. What has UN image suffered for failure to intervene the Rwanda conflict in time?

4. Literature review

The subject matter of peacekeeping is quite old and many studies have been done pertaining it. David A. Wainhouse[1] wrote that peacekeeping, may have begun a decade earlier. First, when UN sent its forces, into Arab-Israel war in 1948, to maintain cease-fire between Israel and her Arab neighbors. Second, the UN sent military men in February 1949 to watch-over the cease-fire between India and Pakistan. Abi-Saab Georges[2] wrote about the UN's largest and bloodiest peacekeeping mission, which took place with the UN's operation in Congo (OUNC) from 1960-1964 which witness the death of nearly 200 peacekeepers.

On the other side Stephen John Stedman[3] is very critical and skeptic about the role of preventive diplomacy before crises have escalated to conflicts. He maintains that preventive diplomacy has been oversold. For him, successful preventive diplomacy requires foresight and the ability to predict where and when crisis can escalate to conflict.

According to Frederick S Pearson and J. Martin Rochester[4] many peacekeeping operations conducted by UN have been neither of the "peaceful settlement" variety intended in Chapter VI nor of the "collective security" variety envisioned in Chapter VII. Often labeled as "Chapter VI and ½" actions, they went far beyond a mediating role yet fell short of collective security. Although one should not exaggerate the UN's successes in the war and peace area, one should not minimize them either. The UN has contributed significantly to peace, especially through the practice of preventive diplomacy, helping to keep local conflicts from escalating into larger conflagrations directly involving mayor powers.

---

1 David W. Wainhouse, *International Peace Observation: A History and Forecast*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966, pp. 221-41.

2 Abi-Saab Georges, *The United Nations Operation in the Congo 1960-1964*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978, pp.133-47.

3 Stedman, Stephen John, "The New Interventionists, America and the World, *Foreign Affairs*, 1992-1993.

4 Frederic S. Pearson and J. Martin Rochester, *International Relations: The Global Condition in the Late Twentieth Century*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992, p.362.

Shaharyar M.Khan[5] in his book "T*he shallow graves of Rwanda"* observed one of the reasons for inadequate and poorly done job by, the UN in Rwanda. He stated that the UN's failure to prevent the massacres or to mediate in the civil war was not through lack of effort or courage. simply lack of mandate, the personnel or the logistic back-up to fulfil its task. There were international pressurses for UN to pull out of Rwanda altogether.

5. Theoretical Framework

The role and position of the UN in Rwanda conflict is of huge importance in explaining and understanding the causes of conflict, its legal nature and the post-war peace building process. Therefore the major aim of this study is to identify the nature of the conflict and the position of the UN regarding that conflict, its achievements and appropriateness of its peace-building mission. Strategies of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peace-keeping, peace enforcement and peace building were developed and refined. These five areas for action taken together and carried out with the backing of all members of the UN offer a coherent contribution towards securing peace in the spirit of the Charter. Although each term has a different role, aims and objectives in dealing with conflicts, in bringing and maintaining peace and security or they are not mutually exclusive but integrally related.

6. Methodology

Qualitative method, which relies on historical-analytical approach, will be followed in this study. This study seeks to describe and explain the historical development of UN's role in pre-conflict and post-conflict Rwanda. This method is chosen in order to allow more analytical and comparative study of the subject matter. At the same time this method is suitable in enabling the researcher to analyze how and why the UN took different stands at different points of time during the Rwandan Conflict.
The data is sourced from both primary and secondary sources, such as books, journals, magazines and newspapers. Which will be collected through library based research, as well as secondary sources will be derived from the UN and documents via internet.

7. Tentative Chapters

This study will be divided into 5 chapters.

1. Introduction
2. Historical background, causes and nature of Rwanda war
3. Actual position and role of UN in Rwanda war
4. Critical evaluation of the role of UN
5. Conclusion & Recommendations

---

5 Shaharyar M.Khan « the Shallow Graves of Rwanda" I.B Publishers London. Pp.7

8. References

[1] Abi-Saab Georges, *The United Nations Operation in the Congo 1960-1964*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978, pp.133-47.

[2] Acharya, A., 1995. 'Regional organisations and UN peacekeeping', in A. Ramesh and C.A. Thayer (eds), A Crisis of Expectations: UN peacekeeping in the 1990s, Westview Press, Colorado:207–22.

[3] Alain Destexhe, Rwandan: « *Essai sur le genocide* » (Brussels: complex, 1994)

[4] Boutros-Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace:Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking andPeacekeeping: Report of the Secretary General Pursuant to the statement adopted by the meeting of the Security Councli on 31 Jnauary 1992,* New York: UN 1992, p13

[5] Clavell, J., 1983. Art of War, Dell Publishing, New York. Department of Peacekeeping Operations, December 1996, Comprehensive Report on Lessons Learned from UNAMIR, October 1993–April 1996, United Nations, New York.

[6] David W. Wainhouse, *International Peace Observation: A History and Forecast*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966, pp. 221-41.

[7] Diehl, F.P., 1995. 'Peacekeeping in civil wars', in A. Ramesh and C.A. Thayer (eds), A Crisis of Expectations: UN peacekeeping in the 1990s, Westview Press, Colorado:223–36

[8] Georges, Abi Saab, *The United Nations, operations in the Congo 1960-1964*, Oxford: oxford Univesity press 1978,

[9] Kuperman, J.A., 1996. 'The other lesson from Rwanda: mediators sometimes do more damage than good', Journal of International Affairs, Winter-Spring:221–40

[10] Shaharyar M.Khan « *the Shallow Graves of Rwanda*" I.B Publishers London. p.7

9. Time schedule

I hope to complete this PhD Thesis within the time standard. That means that the draft report will be finished mid 2010. To fulfil this, I hope to have all the necessary documents checked within June 2010. Later I will start to prepare the material I have checked and collected through the analysis, and hopefully I can start writing the final report early 2011.

In the period of writing the final report (June 2010 up to 2011), I hope to present a paper about the theme.

10. Discussion

When the complete analysis of the paper are finished and the final report written, this material will be of great interest to those who want to place themselves and their research in the domain of UN mission worldwide. Hopefully this paper will bring some new thoughts to researchers around the world, so we all can take benefit of what others do and have done.